

**Amendments to the Drawings:**

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Figure 3. This sheet, which includes Figs. 3-4, replaces the original sheet including Figs. 3-4. Figure 3 has been amended to delete both reference numbers 58, as well as the respective lead lines.

Attachment:      Replacement Sheet  
                  Annotated Sheet Showing Changes

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this application in light of the above amendments and following comments is courteously solicited.

Initially the undersigned would like to thank Examiner Bui for the courtesies extended during a telephone interview held with the undersigned on May 2, 2006. During the telephone interview the outstanding official action and newly cited references were discussed in detail and agreement was reached as to how to amend independent claim 20 so as to define over the cited and applied prior art references and place the instant application in condition for allowance.

Applicant by the instant amendment has cancelled dependent claims 21, 22 and 29 and has incorporated the subject matter of these dependent claims into independent claim 20 along with an additional recitation that the weld bead is adjacent to the stiffening rib. Independent claim 20 as amended now sets forth the following:

"...a connecting device comprising a weld bead located at least in part within the gap for connecting the first connecting portion to the second connecting portion and wherein the first and second wall elements are provided with at least one stiffening defining a portion of the gap and the weld bead is adjacent to the stiffening rib."

None of the prior art references cited or applied by the examiner teach, disclose, suggest or render obvious the structure now claimed in independent claim 20. While the tertiary reference to Ferguson teaches a weld bead, the tertiary reference does not teach the combination of the stiffening elements and the weld bead associated with a gap as now claimed in independent claim 20. The examiner in rejecting previously submitted claims 21, 22 and 29 indicated that the teaches of Ferguson were equivalent to both the weld bead and the stiffening rib; however, the above

noted telephone interview it was agreed that Ferguson cannot be said to teach both of the elements as claimed as well as the relationship between both of the elements as claimed. In light of the foregoing, it is submitted that claim 20 and claims 22-28, 30 and 31 are now in condition for allowance and an early indication of same is respectfully requested.

With regard to the drawing requirement, Applicant apologizes for the error in the previously submitted corrected drawing. Applicant files concurrently herewith an amended Figure 3. Figure 3 has been amended to delete both reference numbers 58, as well as the respective lead lines. Applicant respectfully requests the examiner to approve the entry of the drawing which was agreed to at the oral hearing held with the undersigned on December 5, 2005.

The early issuance of a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

An earnest and thorough attempt has been made by the undersigned to resolve the outstanding issues in this case and place same in condition for allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or feels that a telephone or personal interview would be helpful in resolving any outstanding issues which remain in this application after consideration of this amendment, the Examiner is courteously invited to telephone the undersigned and the same would be gratefully appreciated.

It is submitted that the claims as amended herein patentably define over the art relied on by the Examiner and early allowance of same is courteously solicited.

If any fees are required in connection with this case, it is respectfully requested that they be charged to Deposit Account No. 02-0184.

Respectfully submitted,

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By 

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Date: May 4, 2006

I, Rachel Piscitelli, hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313" on May 4, 2006.





3/4

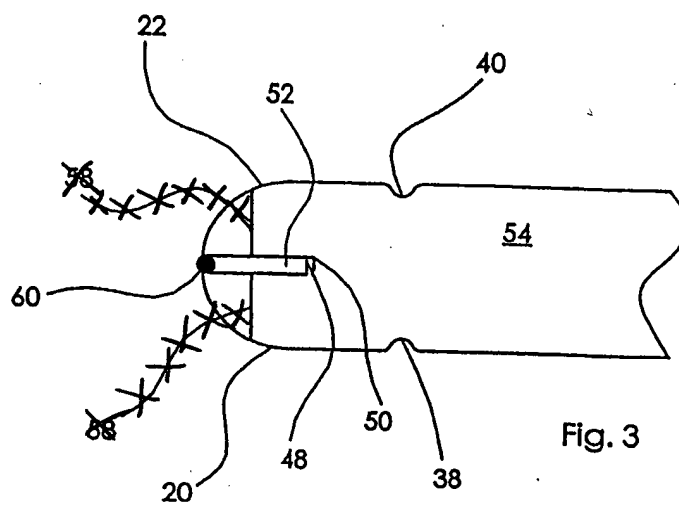


Fig. 3

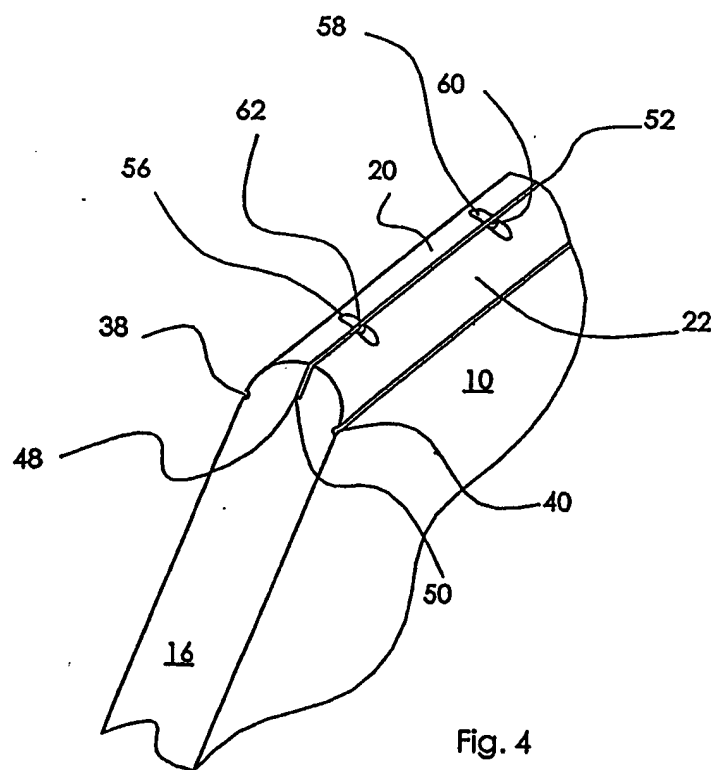


Fig. 4